

critical digest

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New York City Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Diary

Almanac- re-opens Aug 23 at Imperial...The Fifth Season re-opens Sept 5 matinee at Cort...The Pony Cart-De Lys 9/14/54. I B Joselow presents Roger Garis new play... Dear Charles-Morocco 9/15/54. Tallulah Bankhead stars...Home is the Hero-Booth 9/22/54. Theatre Guild-W.Miner presents Walter Macken's play...All Summer Long-Coronet 9/22/54. Robert Anderson's new play with June Walker, John Kerr...A Midsummer Night's Dream-Met Opera 9/21/54. Old Vic production with Moira Shearer...The Boy Friend-9/30 English musical with Julie Andrews.

Strawhat Tryouts

The Automobile Man, Calder Willingham's new play tested at Bucks County, Pa, Playhouse, was panned by Dash, Women's Wear, and Heny, Variety, as an unlikely Broadway bet in its present shape. Chief trouble, trade paper critic notes, is that it is unfunny.

Script lacks focus, sums up Dash...The Vegetable, F. Scott Fitzgerald's comedy starring Wally Cox, would stand scant chance of survival without the TV comic, even on the strawhat circuit, reports Elie-Variety, who viewed it at Marblehead, Mass...Without Consent, Jack Perry's new comedy which debuted at Sturbridge, Mass, is a frothy comedy replete with sharp dialogue, okayed Geor, Variety.

Hits Revisited

Tea and Sympathy seen a second time confirms the original impression of Atkinson, Times, that author is lucky in his director and actors. In a commonplace performance it might be a morbid piece, instead of a study of the tyranny of the mass mind over two sensitive people. Joan Fontaine gives a forceful and thoughtful performance, Anthony Perkins makes his role touching...Teahouse of August Moon is still a delightful show, sums up Hobe, Variety. It is a boxoffice natural that has kept remarkable fresh and refreshing...Oh Men, Oh Women's cast changes have not affected the funny comedy which turns out to be a natural for the summer dog days, reports Jess, Variety. Lloyd Bridges in lead, seems a bit stiff.

Summer Material Dearth

There is not enough new material produced in the summer theatres, complains WNBC Critic at Large, Leon Pearson. The trend is toward commercial packages, productions wrapped up in NY and delivered at the door, for a fixed price. The price of the package may be high, but the sharp men of the business, such as Lee Falk and Don Wolin, know the contents will be professional stuff. Wolin's package of The Little Hut, with Barbara Bel Geddes and Hiram Sherman, which Pearson saw at Matunuck, RI, was better than the Broadway production.

Three Tasteful Strawhats

John Drew Theatre, East Hampton, NY, Newport, RI, Casino and Spring Lake, NJ Ivy Tower Playhouse are the three most tasteful intimate houses of the summer circuit, rates Coleman, Mirror.

 ' Off Broadway '

The Cretan Woman, Robinson Jeffers' play which has just extended its run at the Provincetown Playhouse through Sept 19, will move uptown to Broadway later in the fall. Theodor Marcuse, director of the current production, and Hugh McDonald, will present it uptown with a major part of the cast now playing.

Miriam Elyas, star of Moscow's original 1920 production of The Dybbuk, will star in English production of play at Fourth St Theatre, 83 E 4, in Oct... Theatre 12, formerly the 12th St Players, will present The Flies Aug 29-30 at Cherry Lane... Directors Studio is presenting New York, New York, a dramatic revue, Wed, Thur and Fri at Malin Preview Studios, 225 W 46 through Aug... Nice to Visit, a revue by Jean Meegan, will be presented at an Off Broadway house Sept 27... Lily Turner has been named artistic coordinator of Greenwich Mews Playhouse.

 ' West Coast '

Michael Mark's Players Stage was forced to close in L.A. when several Equity cast members left on union orders not to play with non-equity group... 3 play bill of Stage Society will be seen Aug 22, Aug 27-29, Sept 2-3, at Stage Theatre, L.A. and will consist of The Apollo of Bellac, The Game, and the Fugitives... Cab Calloway quit Porgy and Bess run in L.A. to tour with small combination band... Shame the Devil with Marian Carr debuted at Beverly Hills Playhouse, with prologue by Louella Parsons... The Vacant Lot debuts at La Jolla Aug 24... Broadway Angels will present tryouts of new shows at Las Vegas Sahara.

 ' Vaudeville '

Paul Valentine heads new Palace stage show, with bill including Slate Brothers, Three Arnauts, Peepettes, and Wini and Spencer.

 ' Theatre Film Notes '

Shelley Winters, Julie Harris and Lawrence Harvey star in film version of "I Am A Camera" to be made in England in Oct by Romulus and Moulin Productions... "Bullfight" film version will be made in Mexico shortly with Rita Gam and Anthony Quinn... Betty Garrett, Janet Leigh and Aldo Ray will star in film version of "Wonderful Town"... 20th Century Fox is interested in film rights for "King of Hearts."

 ' Theatre Book Notes '

Christopher Fry's "The Dark is Light Enough" will be published at the end of Aug by Oxford Press... Reviews by Bentley, New Republic, will be reprinted in book form by Horizon Press, 220 W 42.

 ' Theatre Record Notes '

Cadmon Records is planning a series of long playing discs under general title of "Moments of Early English Drama." 20 actors headed by Burgess Meredith, Richard Purdy and 20 others, recorded readings at St. Bartholomew's Church, NYC. First volume of 4 discs includes "Quem Quaertis", "Banns", "The Deluge", "Robin Hood"... RCA will record 6 songs by Eartha Kitt in Mrs Patterson at dress rehearsal in Dec.

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WATCHDOG CRITICS... Reviewers worthy of the name are never satisfied until authors, actors and composers are giving their very best to the public, states "Stage" editorial. The second best is not good enough, and the genuine critic will not let it pass without comment to the effect that there is room for improvement. Critics, British trade paper urges, should be the watchdogs who insist that artists never walk through a performance as if each new play should be as good, if not better, than the author's previous.

COLUMN TIPS... Paul Valentine is going to protest to Equity against Sheila Bond who hit him in the chest during a performance of Wish You Were Here in Pittsburgh recently, reports O'Connor, Journal American... Michael Meyerberg's puppet film production "Hansel and Gretel" will book the Winter Garden, Hears Kilgallen... Union Lime Savings Bank, 6th & 40th, is hunting for Frederick Sumner Logan, aids Francis, Billboard, who has had a sum of money awaiting claim for 15 years.

LONDON'S BAD-GOOD PLAYS... Going to a second rate, trashy play in London is an experience the NY playgoer cannot do, notes Kerr, Herald Tribune. Seeing a play like Agatha Christie's Witness for the Prosecution provides a casual, undemanding, irresponsible, and amiable evening of theatre. It is an experience, critic believes, exactly comparable to settling down for the evening with any detective novel you happen to fancy. You know you are settling for trash, but it just so happens that you want to give an evening to trash.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Summer on Broadway was so dull for awhile, complains Coleman, Mirror, that a drama reporter couldn't even pick up a good rumor... 99% of a first night audience would rather return to the 8 PM first night curtain, remarks Chapman, News, an arch foe of the 8 PM debuts... After viewing several scenes of the "Moby Dick" film on location in Ireland, Watts, Post, has high hopes for the John Huston production.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Entertainment is the reason audiences love Kismet, Alfred Drake told Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun. Audiences like the color and bigness of it all, and the carefully undressed young ladies. He knows they like the music and he thinks they like him. Actor believes music is much better than most realize. Drake plans to take a vacation in Jan and will go to London next spring to repeat his leading role.

! Pros & Cons by TUK !

Commercial tie-ins may be the salvation of the theatre. The publicity tie-in between Park and Tilford and the forthcoming Champagne Complex may at first read like a press agent's gag. Actually it does show the amount of interest which might be instilled in theatre if a little time and thought are given to original ideas. Certainly the liquid tie-in will have no effect on the play's success, but it will certainly help inform all those interested that there is such a play with the title Champagne Complex. The answer is not

bigger and better commercial tie-ins, though some may not have the self control to say no. Instead it shows that there are more ways than are presently being used to get a given show known to a large potential audience. There may even be methods discovered which will insure the performances of what Walter Kerr calls "second rate plays." Entertainment, not perfection, will satisfy many in the theatre.

The four opening nights of Leslie Stevens' new play Champagne Complex will feature free champagne to first nighters served in special glassware with the play's title and a picture of the lead Patricia Smith. Aug 23 at Bucks County Playhouse, New Hope, Pa., is the first stop on the Alexander Cohen-Gayle production. New York opening is scheduled for Oct 27, with other pre-Broadway stops at Hartford and Boston. A "Champagne Toot" bus junket which includes bus transportation to Bucks County, dinner at Monte Proser's Playhouse Inn, a ticket to the show, and the champagne has been scheduled for Aug 23 by Cohen.

Plays

Dear Charles will open at Morosco Sept 10 starring Tallulah Bankhead...The Pajama Game box-office announces it has no more tickets for 1954...On With the Show musical will open at Hellinger Dec 2...James Elliott will produce two Tennessee Williams one-act plays, "Lord Byron's Love Letter" and "27 Wagons Full of Cotton"...William Saroyan and George Abbott will collaborate on the book of a new musical comedy for Brisson-Griffith, Prince, producers of The Pajama Game...Mrs. Ben Hecht's new play Lentil will be produced by Charles Lederer. Play includes role for daughter Jenny...Bernard Simon will be sole producer of The Thracian Horses.

People

Chester Morris will replace Richard Whorf in The Fifth Season which resumes Sept 5...Karl Malden may return to NY stage this season in The Bad Seed...Ann Thomas joins cast of Home is the Hero...David Wayne leaves Teahouse of August Moon Sept 13-Nov 10 to make series of TV films. No replacement has been named yet...The American Academy of Dramatic Arts has arranged to take over the students of Feagin School of Radio and Drama which closed in June...All star variety show benefit Aug 29 at Stamford, Conn for Stratford, Conn, Shakespeare Academy and Theatre will be under direction of Jean Dalrymple.

Summer Playhouses

Summer theatres that closed include Westhampton Playhouse, NY, and Musicarnival, Lake George, NY...Autumn Crocus with Margaret Truman has extended its run at Philadelphia's Playhouse in Park through Sept 4...The Swan with Gloria Vanderbilt Stowoski is playing at Pocono Playhouse, Pa...Mamba's Daughters with Ethel Waters is at Sea Cliff, NY, this week and Ivoryton, Conn, next week.

Other Broadways

Hartford's Parsons Theatre opens Sept 10 with Fragile Fox. Palmer, Hartford Courant critic, will be in his usual seat first nights this season...Blues Opera, with a cast from Porgy and Bess touring company debuts in Paris Oct 25...Tea and Sympathy touring company with Deborah Kerr opens in Asbury Park, NJ, Oct 29

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